

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for processing data elements stored in a data set, comprising:  
organizing the data elements in a directory structure including identifying  
particular elements with particular directories;

5 identifying particular elements within the data set in response to search  
criteria; and

formatting a tree table associated with the data set and associated with a  
display where information associated with the identified data elements is displayed in  
the context of information associated with an immediate parent directory of the  
10 identified data elements and where a pruning indicator display element is included as  
a portion of the display to indicate to a user that at least one directory structure  
associated with the immediate parent directory exists within the directory structure  
but has been omitted from the display.

15 2. The method of Claim 1 whereby the display further comprises a sibling  
pruning indicator display element which is included in the display to indicate to a user  
of the display that data elements which are siblings of an identified data element  
within the immediate parent directory exist within the data set but have been omitted  
from the display and replaced by the sibling pruning indicator display element.

20 3. The method of Claim 1 and further comprising:  
receiving inputs from a user of the display indicating the user's desire to view  
particular subdirectory structures within the directory structure associated with the  
data set;

25 identifying a subdirectory to be displayed in response to input received by the  
user that includes an identified data element that is displayed in conjunction with a  
pruning indicator display element; and

reformatting the display to move the identified data element into the expanded  
subdirectory display group without the pruning indicator display element such that the  
30 identified data element is shown in the correct directory context associated with the  
directory structure associated with the data set.

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4. The method of Claim 1 wherein the display system comprises a component of a computer aided design system and wherein the data elements are digital data sets associated with physical components of a system having a graphical representation associated with the computer aided design system.

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5. The method of Claim 1 wherein the display system is associated with a file storage system and wherein the data elements are data files organized in a hierarchical directory structure.

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6. A data processing system, comprising:

a user interface operable to receive commands from a user and display information to the user;

a display engine in communication with the user interface and operable to  
5 organize a data set into a tree table so that the data set can be displayed as a hierarchical directory tree with data elements organized in subdirectories within the tree;

a search and control engine in communication with the user interface and operable to perform searches on the data set to identify particular data elements responsive to information received from the user via the user interface; and  
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the display engine operable to format the tree table such that the particular identified data elements are displayed through the user interface with a respective parent subdirectory to which each particular identified data element is a member and such that a pruning indicator display element is displayed associated with each particular identified data element which is displayed in a fashion that omits at least one parent directory associated with the particular element.  
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7. The system of Claim 6 wherein the user interface is operable to receive commands from the user to display at least one hidden subdirectory and wherein the display engine is operable to reformat the tree table to remove the pruning indicator display element if a user commands the display of the parent directory associated with a particular identified data element and to display the particular identified data element in the expanded data tree, including any exposed hidden directories.  
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8. The system of Claim 6 wherein the display engine is operable to substitute a sibling pruning indicator display element for data elements which are siblings of the particular identified data element within the parent subdirectory.  
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9. The system of Claim 6 wherein the data set comprises data files within a hierarchically organized file system.  
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10. The system of Claim 6 wherein the data set comprises data elements comprising digital data sets representative of structural components of an assembly renderable by a computer aided design system.

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11. A method for processing data elements stored in a data set, comprising:  
organizing the data elements in a directory structure including identifying  
particular elements with particular directories;

identifying particular elements within the data set in response to search  
criteria;

formatting a tree table associated with the data set and associated with a  
display where information associated with the identified data elements is displayed in  
the context of information associated with an immediate parent directory of the  
identified data elements and where a pruning indicator display element is included as a  
portion of the display to indicate to a user that at least one directory structure  
associated with the immediate parent directory exists within the directory structure  
but has been omitted from the display;

displaying a sibling pruning indicator display element in the display to  
indicate to a user of the display that data elements which are siblings of an identified  
data element within the immediate parent directory exist within the data set but have  
been omitted from the display and replaced by the sibling pruning indicator display  
element;

receiving inputs from a user of the display indicating the user's desire to view  
particular subdirectory structures within the directory structure associated with the  
data set;

identifying a subdirectory to be displayed in response to input received by the  
user that includes an identified data element that is displayed in conjunction with a  
pruning indicator display element; and

reformatting the display to move the identified data element into the expanded  
subdirectory display group without the pruning indicator display element such that the  
identified data element is shown in the correct directory context associated with the  
directory structure associated with the data set.

12. The method of Claim 11 wherein the display system comprises a  
component of a computer aided design system and wherein the data elements are  
digital data sets associated with physical components of a system having a graphical  
representation associated with the computer aided design system.

13. The method of Claim 11 wherein the display system is associated with a file storage system and wherein the data elements are data files organized in a hierarchical directory structure.

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